

## **Federal Child and Family Services Review Process in Wisconsin**

The federal government conducts comprehensive reviews of state child welfare programs for conformance with federal requirements under Titles IV-B (general child welfare program operation) and IV-E. (out-of-home care placement). Reviews are being conducted of all 50 states over a three-year period.

The review process examines 14 aspects of the state program, including 7 outcome measures relating to safety, permanency and well being and 7 systemic factors relating to the overall capacity of the state program to serve children and families. The review process includes a state assessment, analysis of state outcome data, on-site review of cases, and interview with stakeholders.

The Wisconsin preparation for the CFSR started in 2001 with counties completing local assessments of their child welfare programs. The state assessment process began in 2002 and the comprehensive assessment document was completed in June 2003. The state assessment process includes analyzing state performance for the outcome measures based on a state data profile and obtaining input from stakeholders on the systemic factors to assess state strengths and weaknesses in each of the 14 areas. The data profile is based on three years of state outcome data (1999 - 2001) as reported to the federal child abuse and neglect and foster care reporting systems. Based on the state assessment, the review process explored specific issues during the on-site portion of the review.

The on-site portion of the review took place in August 2003 and included examination of individual cases and discussions with stakeholders in three counties. The county locations were Milwaukee (largest urban area), Kenosha and Outagamie. The counties were chosen as suitable locations to examine issues identified in the state assessment and have a child welfare caseload large enough to draw the sample of family and child placement cases needed for the case review.

The on-site portion of the review was conducted by team of federal and state reviewers at each of the three locations. The federal team members included peer reviewers from other states and the state selected persons from various disciplines to participate as state team members. A random sample of 50 cases was reviewed among the three counties, including both in-home safety services and out-of-home care placement cases. The individual case reviews involved analysis of case files and interviews with the family, social worker, service providers, out-of-home care provider, and legal advocates. Interviews were held with stakeholders at the state level and each of the three locations.

State conformance is determined for each of the 14 items based on the 1) state assessment, 2) state outcome data, 3) case reviews and 4) stakeholder interviews. For any items found to be in non-conformance, the state must develop a program enhancement plan (PEP) to address those items. The PEP must establish measurable goals for improving program outcomes and state is allowed a period of two years to implement the PEP and show improvement.

The federal report on the results of the review will likely be issued in November 2003 once final data analysis has been completed. The experience of other states is that program improvement is needed for most of the 14 areas, so Wisconsin will have to develop a program enhancement plan (PEP) within 90 days of receiving the federal report. Once the PEP is approved sometime in 2004, a two-year program improvement period will begin during which the PEP must be implemented and quarterly progress reports submitted. A follow-up federal review, concentrating on the items needing improvement, will take place after the two-year program improvement period is completed.

Fiscal penalties can be imposed against IV-B and IV-E funds received by the state for areas of non-conformance if program improvement goals are not met. Penalties start at 1% per item, which would be approximately \$150,000 per item for Wisconsin, and continue until state comes into conformance. Penalties are withheld during program improvement plan implementation if state is making progress on the improvement goals and goals can be renegotiated. The penalty increases to 2% and then 3% per item if non-conformance continues following subsequent federal reviews.

The outcome measures and systemic factors for the review include:

#### **Outcome Measures:**

- Safety Outcome 1** - Protection of children from abuse and neglect (\*)
- Safety Outcome 2** - Maintain children safely in their homes where appropriate
- Permanency Outcome 1** - Permanence and stability of living situations (\*)
- Permanency Outcome 2** - Preserving continuity of family relationships
- Well-Being Outcome 1** - Enhancing capacity of families to provide for children
- Well-Being Outcome 2** - Educational services to children
- Well-Being Outcome 3** - Physical and mental health services

(\*) National performance measures have been established for these outcomes.

#### **Systemic Factors :**

1. **Information System Capacity** (WiSACWIS system and use of data)
2. **Case Review System** (written case plans and regular permanency hearings)
3. **Quality Assurance** (state program standards and quality assurance activities)
4. **Staff and Provider Training** (training for local agency staff and foster parents)
5. **Service Array** (needs assessment and services to children and families)
6. **Responsiveness to Community** (sharing information and involving stakeholders)
7. **Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment and Retention** (standards for licensing, criminal background checks and recruitment)

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